

# PROMISING PRACTICES IN HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

## *New Hampshire – Care Options for People in Public Housing*

### **Issue: Seamless Delivery of HCBS from Several Funding Sources**

#### Summary

In New Hampshire, a public housing authority has adapted the assisted living model to public housing for older people. Sunrise Towers, a 98-unit public housing complex in Laconia, New Hampshire, offers non-medical home-based services to up to 30 residents. Since the congregate program was established in 1993, the facility has served about 150 people. The program offers a variety of services, including meals and personal assistance, to enable participants to remain in their homes.

#### Introduction

While many programs focus on home and community-based services for people in assisted living facilities and other private, residential settings, the Laconia Housing and Redevelopment Authority in Laconia, New Hampshire, has adopted this model to serve residents in Sunrise Towers, a public housing building for older persons. According to U.S. Census Bureau data (1994-1995), over 40 percent of older people in subsidized housing need assistance with at least one activity of daily living. Sunrise Towers residents benefit from long-term support options and a single point of entry for access to the state's home and community-based service programs. The housing authority works closely with other care providers in the jurisdiction, including the local hospital and public nursing home, to offer coordinated care to program participants.

**The assisted living model was applied to a public housing building for older persons.**

This report briefly describes the structure of the Sunrise Towers congregate housing program, the services the program offers, and funding sources. This document is based primarily on interviews with state officials and housing authority staff who designed and administer the program.

#### Intervention

Under Laconia's congregate housing program, people who are eligible for public housing and need assistance in at least three activities of daily living can apply to be in the program. While most program recipients were residents of Sunrise Towers prior to enrollment, that is not an eligibility requirement. The program does, however, give priority to people who lived in the building before enrollment. The program offers a variety of services: two meals a day, weekly laundry and housekeeping, personal care, transportation to and from all medical appointments, and personal emergency response systems. In addition, an on-site nursing clinic is available once a week.

Because it has been in existence for almost a decade, Laconia's congregate housing program is fairly well known in the town of about 16,000 people. People who may need services learn about the program from a variety of sources, including hospital referrals and congregate housing staff noticing a Sunrise Towers resident who needs help. The program also receives calls from family members, often adult children. For people not already in public housing, the first step is for candidates to apply for public housing and be placed on a waiting list, since the person must live in Sunrise Towers. Then Laconia Housing Authority assesses the person to determine

whether he or she meets the functional eligibility requirements.

Once eligible candidates are identified, a ten-member professional assessment committee (PAC) meets monthly to review their applications and make a final decision as to eligibility. PAC members, some of whom have been involved since the program's inception, include representatives from the local hospital, the public nursing home, and the New Hampshire

Department of Health and Human Services Division of Elderly and Adult Services. This

**Residents can transition seamlessly from the housing agency program to a Medicaid HCBS waiver.**

close working relationship extends beyond PAC meetings, and facilitates coordination of care through short-term hospital stays and transition of program participants, when necessary, to nursing home care.

Like other public housing residents, residents of Sunrise Towers are required to pay 30 percent of their adjusted gross income (AGI) for rent. Those enrolled in the congregate housing program pay up to an additional 20 percent of AGI for the services. The resident co-pay covers about 10 percent of the program's costs. The majority of the funding comes from two sources: about 40 percent from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Congregate Housing Services Program grant. Matching state funds, which are required for the grant, provide the other 50 percent of program funds. While HUD no longer funds new congregate programs, it continues to maintain funding for 42 existing programs serving a total of 591 elderly and 75 non-elderly participants. The Laconia Housing Authority has also established a separate nonprofit foundation in order to tap into charitable donations, including funding from the United Way.

In addition to the congregate care program, residents can use a Medicaid home and community-based services waiver program for older people called Home and Community

Based Care (HCBC). Participants in both programs receive many of the same in-home services, which allows residents to transition seamlessly from the congregate care program to HCBC as their health deteriorates (and they qualify for the level of care provided in a nursing home) and as they qualify financially for Medicaid. A different case manager, from the state Division of Elderly and Adult Services, determines HCBC eligibility and works with the participant to develop a service plan. Since the Medicaid waiver offers a free choice of providers, participants can choose other agencies to provide in-home services if they use HCBC. From October 1, 2001, to September 30, 2002, five Sunrise Towers participants have transitioned from the congregate program to HCBC.

### Implementation

While the Sunrise Towers congregate housing program offers pretty much the same services today as when the program started, the Laconia Housing Authority has taken steps over time to save money and improve operational efficiencies. One example is the recent decision (made possible by a grant from the Samuel P. Pardoe Foundation) to cross-train some staff. This has enabled specific staff members to undertake more than one function – such as housekeeping, food service delivery, and personal care.

In another step forward, the housing authority recently obtained a home health license, enabling the agency to handle personal care services in-house, rather than having to contract that work out. The program's nurse oversees the personal care work performed by licensed nursing aides. In addition, the housing authority is currently training personal care aides, housekeepers, and food delivery people to be licensed nursing aides (so, for example, they can bathe people). This training also enables staff to be universal aides, so that participants can have a single person for all their services.

**Almost all program staff received case management training.**

At Sunrise Towers, almost all program staff, including housekeepers and meal delivery people, have received case management training in recent years, and must take case management notes for daily or weekly review by the program director. This offers more opportunities to check up on residents, talk to them, and make sure everything is okay. In addition, several staff members at Sunrise Towers are licensed nursing assistants. This cross-training has resulted in operational efficiencies as well as improving quality of care. For example, if a housekeeper cleans a refrigerator and finds several apples in there, he may ask why and learn that the person can't chew apples. In that event, he can tell the food delivery people to bring another item, like apple sauce, instead.

### Impact

The congregate housing program has enabled people in public housing to age in place. In the

year ending September 30, 2002, the Sunrise Towers Congregate Housing Program served 39 residents. According to the Laconia Housing and Redevelopment Authority's 2002 report to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, two residents were relocated to a nursing home and one was permanently relocated to the hospital. The previous year, four people were relocated to a nursing home. The Laconia congregate housing program costs approximately \$12,000 per person per year, including housing and services.

### Contact Information

For more information about the Sunrise Towers Congregate Housing Program, please contact Charlotte DuBois, Director, Laconia Housing and Redevelopment Authority, at (603) 524-2112, extension 13 or [charlotte@laconiahousing.org](mailto:charlotte@laconiahousing.org).

### Discussion Questions:

**The housing agency's program requires people to use one provider. Can a housing agency provide a similar model while giving residents freedom to choose providers?**

**What additional funding sources may states or housing agencies use to finance this model?**

This report was written by Daria Steigman of Steigman Communications. It is one of a series of reports by The MEDSTAT Group for the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) highlighting promising practices in home and community-based services. The entire series is available online at CMS' web site, <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>. This report is intended to share information about different approaches to offering home and community-based services. This report is not an endorsement of any practice.